# "THE SANTA CLAUSE"

A screenplay

by

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FADE IN:

ESTABLISHING SHOT

EXT. THE HOUSE OF SCOTT CALVIN - DUSK

It's winter. The house is sparsely decorated for the Christmas Season. A string of colored lights rims the door frame, but one side has come loose and hangs down.

A taxi pulls up. A WOMAN and CHILD get out.

WOMAN
(to the driver)
Wait here.

She takes the boy's hand and leads him up the path to the front door.

EXT. FRONT PORCH

The door opens. SCOTT CALVIN stands there. He gets down on one knee and opens his arms.

SCOTT
Hey, Sport!

The boy reluctantly gives his dad a hug.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
(to the woman)
Hi, Laura. Wanna come in for a minute?

LAURA
I got a cab waiting.

SCOTT
One minute. It's Christmas Eve.

Laura gestures to the taxi driver to wait. They all go into the house.

INT. THE FOYER

There are more minimal decorations. An artificial tree sits near the fire place. It's slightly crooked. There are many presents under the tree.

SCOTT
Hey, Sport, why don't you go look under the tree? I think most of those are for you.

The boy exits to the tree.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
(to Laura)
I've got something for you.

LAURA
I wish you hadn't.

Scott hands her a present.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I didn't get you anything.

SCOTT
You're letting me have Tim for Christmas... that's gift enough.

LAURA
Come on, Scott. You know if there was any way I could bring him to New York with me, I would. Don't make this seem like anything more than it is.

SCOTT
Right. I guess I'm cheaper than a baby sitter.

LAURA
This is an important week for Neal. Tim wouldn't have a good time.

SCOTT
I still don't get it.

LAURA
Neal is being honored by the American Psychiatric Society for his work--

SCOTT
(interrupting)
No. I get that part. I just can't figure what you see in that bloated head shrinker.

LAURA
Let's not do this now.

SCOTT
No, I'm serious. I think this guy's got you under some kind of hypnotic spell. Shrinks do that kind of stuff, ya' know?

LAURA
There's so much you don't understand... about Neal, about me... about psychology.

There is a HORN HONKING from outside.

LAURA
My cab's waiting.

SCOTT
Aren't you going to open your present?

Slowly, she does. Inside is a picture frame.

CLOSE ON THE FRAME

It's a photo of Laura, Scott and Tim on a beach.

BACK TO SCENE

SCOTT
(softly)
That was two summers ago. Remember? What happened to us? What did I do that was so wrong?

LAURA
It's not you. It's... No, it is you. It's...

The taxi's HORN HONKS again.

LAURA (CONT'D)
...it's a very nice picture, Scott, but it doesn't change anything. Neal and I are getting married in February.

SCOTT
You know I'll fight you for custody.

LAURA
You'll lose.

Tim enters.

TIM
There aren't that many presents out there.

SCOTT
Well, Santa hasn't brought his load yet.

TIM
There's no Santa.

SCOTT
Of course there is.

TIM
Uncle Neal said there isn't and he's a doctor.

SCOTT
(hurt)
Uncle Neal?

Scott shoots Laura a dirty look.

LAURA
He only said that Santa Claus was more like a state of mind than a real person. It's that state of mind that we believe in. The spirit of Christmas. The feeling one gets. That's what Santa Claus is. That's the belief we endorse.

SCOTT
Well put. I'm sure our eight year old son appreciates the endorsement.

LAURA
We try to give Tim a firm grasp on reality.

SCOTT
Now that's a good idea. We wouldn't want a bunch of kids running around using their imaginations.

TIM
You two fighting again?

SCOTT
Just disagreeing, Sport. You see, Mom and Uncle
(wincing)
Neal don't believe in Santa Claus because they've been naughty and they know that Santa will bring them a lump of coal. You and I know better. There is a Santa Claus. You'll see. He'll bring you more presents once you go to sleep.

TIM
I don't know. Seems kinda baby-ish to believe in that kind of stuff.

A longer HORN HONK from the cab.

SCOTT
You better go. We wouldn't want to keep Doctor Brilliant waiting at the airport.

Laura gets down on her knees to hug Tim. He gives her a big hug back.

LAURA
I'm really gonna miss you, Sweety.

TIM
I wanna go with you. Why can't I go with you?

LAURA
You and Daddy will have a great Christmas. And I'll see you right after New Year's.

TIM
(sniffling back tears)
I know.

LAURA
I love you, Tim.

TIM
I love you, too.

She stands up and starts to leave. She stops, turns around and reaches into her purse. Scott beams with delight. He thinks she's got a present for him. Laura takes out a sheet of paper and hands it to Scott. His smile drops.

LAURA
Here are the numbers where you can reach me.

SCOTT
(under his breath)
You could've at least gift wrapped it.

LAURA
What?

SCOTT
Nothing. Have a good time.

LAURA
You too.

She gives one last kiss to Tim.

LAURA (CONT'D)
'Bye.

Scott opens the door for her and she leaves. He watches her go and after a moment, he closes the door.

Scott turns back to Tim who is holding the picture frame that Laura left behind.

TIM
Why were you wearing an innertube?

SCOTT
(looking at the photo)
I'm not wearing an innertube.

TIM
What's that around your waist?

SCOTT
(beat)
Muscles, Tim. A ring of muscles.
(beat)
Hey, I bet you're hungry, huh? I made us a special Christmas dinner.

INT. DINING ROOM - THAT EVENING

Scott and Tim are finishing their TV Dinners.

SCOTT
So. Not bad for a bachelor, huh?

TIM
I don't like turkey.

SCOTT
Everybody likes turkey.

TIM
Uncle Neal doesn't.

SCOTT
Do you have to do everything Uncle
(winces)
Neal does?

TIM
You don't like him, do you, Dad?

Scott doesn't answer.

TIM (CONT'D)
You mad 'cause I'm gonna be living with him and not you?

SCOTT
You know, Tim, if you really wanted to, you could live with me. We'd have a great time.

TIM
When?

SCOTT
When what?

TIM
I see you a lot and we never have a great time.

SCOTT
Sure we do.

TIM
No we don't.

SCOTT
How can you say that? I take you to ball games and the zoo and the park and... and museums. That's fun.

TIM
Nuh uh. That's just doing stuff.

SCOTT
That's what having a good time is... doing stuff.

TIM
We're always just rushin' around. Even if I don't wanna do something, you make me do it. You never ask me what I wanna do. You never just talk to me like--

Tim stops himself.

SCOTT
Like who?
(beat)
Like Uncle Neal?

TIM
He listens to me. He understands me.

SCOTT
I understand you.

TIM
Not when I tell you things.

SCOTT
What're you talking about? Don't I listen to you?

TIM
Not like Uncle Neal.

There's an uncomfortable pause while Scott takes this all in.

SCOTT
So, you don't wanna live with me?

TIM
I think I better live with Mom. You know... I think that'd be better.

SCOTT
(trying to show he's not hurt)
Yeah, I guess you're right.

Pause.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
So, you wanna open some presents?

TIM
Yeah, I guess. If you say so.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

A few of the presents have been opened. There is Nintendo paraphernalia all over the floor. Scott and Tim are sitting on the floor. Scott is reading.

SCOTT
"When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter ... "

TIM
What's that?

SCOTT
What?

TIM
A rose suchak ladder?

SCOTT
(amused)
No. "Arose such a clatter." It means there was a noise coming from the roof. Noise... clatter.

TIM
Oh.

SCOTT
(continuing)
"I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter..."

TIM
Dad?

SCOTT
Yeah?

TIM
Do you really believe in Santa?

SCOTT
Well... yeah. I do.

TIM
How do reindeer fly? They don't have any wings.

SCOTT
They use that fairy dust stuff.

TIM
No. That's from Peter Pan.

SCOTT
Oh.

TIM
So, how do they fly without any wings? And if Santa is so fat, how does he get down the chimneys? And what about people who don't have fireplaces? How does he get into their houses?

SCOTT
Look, Tim. Believing in something sometimes means that you just believe in it. I mean, reindeer fly, because that's how Santa gets around. You can't stop believing in things just 'cause... it doesn't make any sense.

TIM
So, you really believe in Santa?

SCOTT
Yeah. Yeah, Sport, I do.

TIM
(thinking)
We better leave some cookies and milk out, then. Just in case.

SCOTT
That'd be great.

INT. BEDROOM - LATE THAT NIGHT

The only sound is the steady HUM of the humidifier. Scott is asleep. There is a faint NOISE. After a moment, it gets a bit LOUDER. Tim enters the bedroom and stands next to the bed. He hears the NOISE.

TIM
Dad?

Scott turns over in his sleep. Tim goes to Scott and nudges him.

SCOTT
What is it?

TIM
I heard a noise.

SCOTT
I didn't hear ...

There is the NOISE again.

TIM
There.

SCOTT
What is that?

TIM
It's coming from outside. I'm scared.

SCOTT
It's nothing. Probably the wind. Go back to sleep.

There is a SOUND of a LOUD BUMP from the roof.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Shh!

The ceiling CREAKS.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Somebody's on the roof.

TIM
Maybe it's Santa.

SCOTT
Not now, Tim.

Scott reaches into his bedside table drawer and pulls out a revolver.

TIM
Neat! Is it real, Dad? Can I shoot him?

SCOTT
I'm not gonna shoot anybody. I'm just gonna scare him.

There's another NOISE.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
I'm going outside. You wait here.

He starts to leave and then turns back.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Tim? Do you know how to call the police?

TIM
Sure. Nine-one-one. Everybody knows that.

SCOTT
Well, if you hear anything... funny, I want you to call them. Okay?

TIM
Sure.

SCOTT
Wait here.

EXT. BACK PORCH

It's dark. By the NOISE it's clear that there is indeed somebody on the roof.

The full moon is casting deep shadows. Scott moves away from the house and looks up to the roof. He hears a SOUND.

HIS POV

He sees a shadow of a man near the chimney.

SCOTT
(shouting)
Hey, you!

THE MAN is startled and loses his balance. He grabs for something, but there's nothing there. He slides down the side of the roof and falls to the ground. Scott goes to him. The man is lying perfectly still. Scott gives him a little nudge with his foot. The man doesn't move.

Tim comes out in his bathrobe.

TIM
Neat, Dad! You got him!

SCOTT
Stay back, Tim.

Scott looks at the body. The man is dressed in a Santa Claus suit. He approaches him. Scott gently nudges him again; still no movement. Scott turns the man over. The man wears a red hat and white beard.

Tim comes up behind him.

TIM
(excited)
It is Santa.
(sudden realization)
You killed him! You killed Santa Claus.

SCOTT
Don't be silly. There is no Santa Claus.

TIM
You told me there was.

SCOTT
Well... there is. This just isn't him. He was trying to... I don't know... break into the house or something. And I didn't kill him. He fell off the roof.

TIM
Well who is he, then? It looks like Santa.

Scott reaches down to take off the beard.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
It's real. The beard. It won't come off.

Scott goes through the man's pockets. He finds a wallet. In the wallet is a business card.

XCU: THE CARD

It reads: "SANTA CLAUS, NORTH POLE".

BACK TO SCENE

TIM
What're you gonna do, Dad? Want me to call call the police?

SCOTT
I... I dunno.

Scott turns the card over.

SCOTT
(reading)
"If something should happen to me, put on my suit. The reindeer will know what to do".

There is a SCRAPING SOUND from the roof. They look at each other. Scott and Tim look up to the roof.

THEIR POV

Now visible, parked next to the chimney is a rather large sleigh with a huge bag in the back. Harnessed to the sleigh are eight reindeer.

BACK TO THE SCENE

SCOTT
Let's go inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM

TIM
Told you, Dad. It is Santa. What're you gonna do now?

SCOTT
(in disbelief)
How'd those reindeer get up there?

TIM
They flew! Just like you said.

SCOTT
Reindeer don't fly, Tim. I don't even know if there is such a thing as reindeer.

TIM
Then, what're those things up on the roof?

Scott shakes his head. He has no answer.

TIM (CONT'D)
You gonna put on the suit like the note said? Are you?

Scott is speechless.

TIM (CONT'D)
'Cause if you do and you get on the sleigh... I wanna go too. It'll be great!

SCOTT
(firmly)
Look, Tim. There's no such thing as Santa Claus and there's no such thing as flying reindeer.

TIM
But you said--

SCOTT
Forget about what I said. Now, I don't know what's going on here... but... I just don't know what to do.

TIM
Put on the suit. The reindeer will know what to do. That's what the note said. That's what you should do.

Scott looks at Tim. Then at at the card again.

TIM (CONT'D)
Go 'head, Dad. Put it on the suit. The reindeer will know what to do. I wanna go, too. Please. Can I go, too?

Scott opens the door and starts to exit. He appears to be in some euphoric trance.

TIM
Yay! And I'm going, too, right?

Pause.

SCOTT
Put your coat on. It's cold outside.

EXT. THE BACK YARD - NIGHT

Scott sees that there is a ladder up against the house. He and Tim go to it.

SCOTT
Where'd this come from?

TIM
Look here, Dad. It's like in the poem.

They both look at a medal plaque on the ladder which reads: "THE ROSE SUCHAK LADDER COMPANY."

SCOTT
Huh?

TIM
"Out by the roof there's a rose suchak ladder."

SCOTT
(confused)
Yeah. Like the poem.

Scott goes over to the dead Santa and puts on the jacket and hat. He then holds the ladder for Tim.

SCOTT
Be careful... and just sit there, till I get up.

Tim climbs the ladder and gets to the roof. Scott follows.

THE ROOF

Scott and Tim carefully approach the sleigh. One reindeer get restless.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Easy, Rudolph.

The reindeer rears up his head. Scott notices a tag around its neck. It reads: "COMET".

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Sorry... Comet.

Comet calms down. Scott looks in the sleigh. There is a small box on the seat. A sign on the box reads: "OPEN". Scott opens it. Inside is a white beard.

TIM
Neat. Put it on, Dad.

Scott puts on the beard.

TIM (CONT'D)
You look just like him. You really do.

Scott gets in the sleigh. The reindeer remain calm.

SCOTT
Come on, Sport. Sit next to me.

Cautiously, he takes a hold of the reins. There are rows of bells along them. He jingles the reins. The reindeer get restless. Scott remains still. Comet turns his head around and looks directly at Scott. They stare at each other for a moment. Without thinking, Scott takes the reins and shakes them vigorously. The reindeer gallop to the end of the roof and take off.

SCOTT
Hold on, Tim. Hold on tight!

Scott has trouble handling the sleigh. They leave the roof and go right through a large oak tree. As they fly off into the horizon, WE can hear Scott as he shouts out in shock. The YELL sounds a lot like, "Ho Ho Ho."

EXT. THE SLEIGH SOMEWHERE OVER AMERICA - NIGHT

Scott is not so much driving the sleigh as he is just along for the ride.

EXT. THE ROOF OF A HOUSE - NIGHT

The reindeer land on the roof of a quaint house. There's a STILLNESS in the air. Scott takes a deep breath.

TIM
Boy. They fly pretty fast.

SCOTT
What do I do now?

Comet turns his head and looks at Scott. Comet then looks at the bag in the back of the sleigh.

TIM
Toys! Get the bag of toys.

It looks as if Comet nods.

SCOTT
How will I know what to leave?

TIM
Maybe there's a list in the bag.

Scott moves to the back of the sleigh. He picks up the bag.

SCOTT
It's heavy!

The weight of it causes Scott to lose his balance and he braces himself by holding on to the chimney.

TIM
Careful, Dad.

SCOTT
I'm alright.

Scott begins to slowly rise off the roof.

TIM
Hey, Dad! Look. You're flying!

Scott looks down and sees that he is indeed hovering. He tries to get his feet back down but to no avail.

SCOTT
What the ...!

He rises up and remains hovering over the chimney. Then he gradually begins to descend. He flails a bit but soon realizes that he has no control over his descent.

(MORE)

He gets close to the opening in the chimney. Then, almost as if he were no longer flesh and bone, but rather a liquid, he pours down the flue

INT. THE FIREPLACE - NIGHT

Scott's feet are seen coming out of the fireplace, followed by his legs, torso and finally his neck and head. He's in one piece and still holding the bag.

THE LIVING ROOM

Scott finds himself next to a sparsely decorated tree. He looks into the bag.

He reaches in and pulls out three items: a doll, a toy rifle and a pair of sneakers. He opens the bag up wide. There's nothing else in it. He leaves the three gifts and picks up the empty bag. As before, he's liquified and floats back up the chimney.

EXT. THE ROOF - NIGHT

Scott floats out of the chimney.

TIM
Wow! How'd you do that?!
What'd it feel like?

SCOTT
Let's get outta here, Sport.
The bag's empty. We're done.

They cross to the sleigh and Scott puts the bag in the back.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Let's go home, Comet.

They get back into the sleigh and Scott snaps the reins. The reindeer take off.

EXT. THE SLEIGH, FLYING SOMEWHERE - NIGHT

Scott tries to halt the reindeer.

SCOTT
Whoa! Whoa! Ho!

EXT. ANOTHER ROOF - NIGHT

The sleigh glides and touches down gently.

SCOTT
What?!

TIM
Do it again, Dad. Go down the chimney again.

SCOTT
Tim, the bag's empty. There's nothing more to leave.

Comet looks at him.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
(to Comet)
It's empty! Now, take us home.

Comet bucks up. He's angry.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Alright, alright. Fine.

Scott moves to the back of the sleigh and picks up the bag. The bag is heavy again.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
That's funny, I thought ...

Again he finds himself next to the chimney. More hovering and the next thing he knows ...

INT. BY THE FIREPLACE - NIGHT

... he's standing next to the Christmas tree.

SCOTT
What do I do? Leave the bag?

He looks in the bag.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Well, I'll be ...

He pulls out a red fire truck, a soccer ball and Jack-in-the-box. He leaves them under the tree.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Weird.

As he turns to pick up the bag he bumps his leg on a table.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Ow! Sh--

He muffles his curse. He doesn't want to wake anyone. There's been enough bloodshed for one night. He looks on the table. There's a glass of milk and some cookies there. He eats one of the cookies and puts the rest in his pocket. He drinks most of the milk.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
That's good.

Next to the cookies he sees a plate of vegetables; carrots, celery and an apple. He puts them in his other pocket. He grabs hold of the bag and braces himself for the transport.

EXT. THE ROOF - NIGHT

TIM
What'd you leave, Dad? I thought you said the bag was empty.

SCOTT
I guess I was wrong. Hey, you hungry?

TIM
Starved.

Scott hands him the cookies.

TIM (CONT'D)
Where's you get these? Someone leave them for you?

SCOTT
Uh huh.

Comet seems restless. So do the rest of the pack.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
(to Comet)
What's the matter, boy?

Comet rears back his head.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
You hungry, too?

Comet nods. Scott reaches into his pocket and takes out the vegetables. He feeds a carrot to Comet. Now, all the others want theirs.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
I got plenty. Here you go ...

TIM
Let me try.

Tim feeds the reindeer, too.

Scott and Tim read the name tags as they feed them.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
"... Prancer. Donder, Blitzen. Dasher. "

TIM
"Dancer, Vixen. Cupid. Comet."

They pet each one. The reindeer in turn nuzzle them.

SCOTT
I guess we go on.

Scott and Tim get in the sleigh. They seem a bit more relaxed now. Indeed, Scott appears to be completely comfortable in the task at hand.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Well! Come on. There's work to be done! Now Dasher! Now Dancer! Now Prancer and Vixen!

He takes his seat and yanks on the reins.

TIM
On Comet! On Cupid! On Donder and Blitzen!

CLOSE ON Comet who rolls his eyes as if to say, "We've got a couple of lives wire this time!".

They fly off, into the darkness.

MONTAGE - THE REST OF THE NIGHT:

1. Scott and Tim comfortably settle into the job.
2. There's more cookies and vegetables.
3. Scott's voice gets huskier as the night goes on.
4. The bag is bottomless.
5. Finally, the first sliver of light peaks out in the east.

SCOTT
(to the reindeer)
'Morning, boys!
(to Tim)
'Morning, Sport! Ho! Ho! Ho!

The sleigh takes off to a much higher altitude, breaking through the low hanging clouds. But, we hear Scott exclaim, as he drives out of sight ...

SCOTT (CONT'D)
... Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

ESTABLISHING SHOT

EXT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP, THE NORTH POLE - MORNING

The sleigh is seen coming in for a landing. AN ELF stands by a large hangar and he guides the reindeer in with two lights, like at an airport.

INT. THE HANGAR - MORNING

A LARGE GROUP OF ELVES helps with the sleigh and the reindeer. Some groom the reindeer. Others begin to clean and polish the sleigh. They all pay no attention to Scott and Tim.

TIM
(taking it all in)
Cool!

Scott gets out and goes up to one of the elves.

SCOTT
'Scuse me.

The Elf bows.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Who's in charge here?

ELF
You are.

SCOTT
No. I mean... you guys... who's in charge?

ELF
You are.

SCOTT
Who's the head elf?!

ELF
You are.

Another Elf approaches. He's BERNARD and he's bit taller than the first one.

BERNARD
Who's causing all the trouble around here?

ELF
(pointing to Scott)
He is.

BERNARD
(to the Elf)
Come on now. Back to work. We've only got a year to get ready.

The Elf busies himself. Bernard turns to Scott.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Can I get you a drink, sir?

SCOTT
Who are you?

BERNARD
I'm Bernard.

SCOTT
You know me?

BERNARD
Of course I do.

SCOTT
Who am I?

BERNARD
Don't you know?

SCOTT
I know. I want to see if you know. Who am I?!

BERNARD
You're the guy who killed Santa Claus.

SCOTT
I didn't kill him! He fell.
(pause)
How'd you know?

BERNARD
It happens all the time. Can I get you a drink?

TIM
I'm thirsty... and hungry.

BERNARD
Who's this?

SCOTT
My son. Tim.

TIM
Hi.

BERNARD
Hiya, Sport.

TIM
Hey, Dad, he called me Sport... just like you.

BERNARD
Why not? You look like a Sport.

Tim laughs.

BERNARD
(to LARRY, an Elf)
Larry, take Time here and get him some chow.

Tim and Larry exit.

SCOTT
(calling after them)
Tim!

BERNARD
He'll be okay.
(beat)
So. What's on your mind?

SCOTT
Look, I don't know what's going on around here... all I know is that I just spent Christmas Eve flying around in a sleigh and I got a dead body in my back yard.

BERNARD
Can we walk while we talk? We're kinda busy here. We've only got a year to prepare.

Bernard begins to leave the hangar. Scott follows.

EXT. THE HANGAR - MORNING

Bernard is seen coming out of the hangar with Scott close on his heels.

SCOTT
Wait a second!

BERNARD
Follow me. You'll be wanting to get out of those clothes.

SCOTT
I'll be wanting to go home!

BERNARD
You are home.

Bernard enters a building. It's Santa's Workshop.

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - MORNING

Hundreds of ELVES are busy making toys.

SCOTT
This is not my home.

BERNARD
It is now.

SCOTT
It is not!

BERNARD
Is too. Did you or did you not read the card?

SCOTT
Well... yeah, I did, but--

BERNARD
Then you're the new Santa Claus. In putting on the hat and jacket you accepted the contract.

SCOTT
What contract?

BERNARD
The card you pulled out of Santa's wallet. You said you read it. So, when you stepped into the sleigh, you fell subject to the "Santa Clause."

SCOTT
What? Wait, you're saying that card was a contract?

BERNARD
Yup.

SCOTT
And I... what?... became subject to being Santa Claus...?

BERNARD
No. You fell subject to <u>the</u> "Santa Clause."

SCOTT
What Santa Claus? The dead guy?

BERNARD
Not Santa Claus the person. "Santa Clause" the clause. The Clause in the contract which says you're Santa Claus.

SCOTT
Hey, I'm no lawyer, but that little card was no contract.

BERNARD
You still have it?

Scott looks through his pockets and finds the card. He hands it to Bernard who points to the bottom of the card.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
See. right here, in fine print.
(reading)
"Santa Clause: in putting on this suit and entering the sleigh, the wearer waives any and all rights to any previous identity real or implied and fully and without reservation accepts the duties and responsibilities of Santa Claus until such time that wearer becomes unable to do so either by accident or design, albeit, notwithstanding any and all liability which wearer and wearer's heirs hereby waive judgement against management."
(to Scott)
The Santa Clause. It's all very standard.

SCOTT
That's ridiculous! I'm not--

Bernard stops dead in his tracks. Scott bumps into him. Bernard tugs on Scott's coat to pull him down to his level to look him square in the eye.

BERNARD
(sternly)
Try to understand this. Toys have to be delivered. I'm not gonna do it. It's not my job. I'm just an elf. It's Santa's job. But Santa's dead. You read the card. You put on the suit! That clearly falls under the "Santa Clause" so now you're Santa! Okay!

SCOTT
And what about this dead Santa? What's gonna happen when he's found? You know, where I come from people frown upon dead people in your back yard.

BERNARD
You don't have to get snotty. It's been taken care of.

Bernard goes to a window and points out. Scott follows and looks out the window.

SCOTT'S POV

Three reindeer pull a cart with a casket on it. The cart is surrounded by elves.

SCOTT
Is that... how'd you get him here?

BERNARD
We're kind of... magical around here. It helps lighten the work load.

Bernard takes off. Scott stays where he is. Bernard stops and turns back to Scott.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Judy will take you to your room. Get out of the suit. It needs to be pressed. Then get some sleep. We've got a lot of work to do and only a year in which to do it.

Bernard exits.

A FEMALE ELF, JUDY, is suddenly standing next to Scott.

SCOTT
Judy?

JUDY
Santa?

SCOTT
Yeah... I guess.

JUDY
Follow me.

INT. SANTA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Judy enters followed by Scott.

JUDY
Can I get you anything?

SCOTT
I'm okay.

JUDY
You should get some sleep.
(pause)
Your pajamas are in the closet.
I'll be right back.

Judy leaves, shutting the door. Scott takes off the Santa jacket and opens the closet. He takes out a pair of pajamas and puts on the tops. He finishes getting in them. They're a beautiful pair of red, silk pajamas. There's a monogram on the breast pocket: " SC". He leaves the beard on. There's a KNOCK on the door.

SCOTT
It's open.

Judy enters with a tray.

JUDY
I brought you some cocoa. And a donut, too. They're fresh.

SCOTT
Thanks.

JUDY
Anything else?

SCOTT
No. Thanks.

He sips the cocoa.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Mmm. This is good.

JUDY
Thanks. Good night, sir.

She leaves. Scott takes a bite of the donut. It's obvious that it's delicious by the way he devours the rest of it. He gets into the bed and covers himself with the overstuffed quilt. As he closes his eyes WE:

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

There's a person in the bed. WE SEE an arm with a red silk sleeve hanging out of the quilt. There's a NOISE from somewhere. Scott, still in the monogrammed pajamas, shakes himself to consciousness.

Tim bursts into the room.

TIM
(all excited)
He was here! He was here! You should see all the toys. Come on, get up... get up!

Scott gets out of bed. He notices the pajamas he's got on. Suddenly, he runs out of the room.

EXT. BACK YARD

Scott frantically looks around for the body. There's no sign of it. He runs back into the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Scott slumps down next to the tree. Around the tree are many new presents.

TIM
Dad, you okay? Are you having a heart attack?

SCOTT
What?

TIM
A heart attack? Joseph's dad had a heart attack and Joseph said that his dad fell right on the floor. What's a heart attack?

SCOTT
A heart attack? It's... it's like having a sore on your heart... like... I don't know... I'm okay.

Scott runs his finger over the "SC" monogram on his red pajamas.

TIM
I think they look kinda girly.

SCOTT
What?

TIM
Those 'jammies. I think they're girly.

SCOTT
You've seen them before?

TIM
Yeah.

SCOTT
When?

TIM
You were wearing 'em last night.

Scott looks at the monogram.

SCOTT
"S.C." Scott Calvin.

TIM
Yeah, 'cause that's your name.

SCOTT
(dreamily)
Santa was here last night.

TIM
I know. Let's open the presents!

SCOTT
Santa fell off our roof and died and then we--

He cuts himself off. He looks at Tim who is a busy opening the presents. He doesn't hear his dad.

TIM
Alright! A Super Soaker Gun. Just what I wanted!

Scott shakes his head, trying to clear it.

SCOTT
This is crazy.

TIM
What?

SCOTT
Nothing. Just some crazy dream I had.

TIM
(opening another present)
Galaxia Battle Cruiser! Alright, Dad! I wanted this, too!

Scott smiles at Tim. He looks down at the pajamas, still a bit confused.

SCOTT
These aren't my pajamas.

TIM
She gave them to you.

SCOTT
Who?

TIM
(opening a box)
New Reeboks!

SCOTT
She... who?

TIM
(refering to the Reeboks)
Mom said that these were too expensive! This is great!

SCOTT
Who?

TIM
Mom.

SCOTT
(to himself)
Laura? Laura gave these to me?

A smile comes to Scott's face as he shakes off the confusion.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
(excited)
Come on, Sport. Let's open some more presents!

Scott and Tim rip into the presents. On this mayhem WE:

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCOTT'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The tree is gone. So are the decorations. A small suitcase sits next to the fireplace. The doorbell RINGS. Tim runs in from the kitchen.

TIM
It's Mommy!

INT. FOYER

Tim flings the door open and Laura is standing there.

TIM
Mommy!

LAURA
Hi, Sweety.

They hug and kiss.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Did you have a good time?

TIM
Great.

Scott approaches. He hasn't shaved in a week. His beard is coming in grayish-white.

SCOTT
Hi, Laura.

LAURA
Scott. I should have bought you a razor for Christmas.

SCOTT
How was New York?

LAURA
Beautiful. Neal was a big hit--

SCOTT
(cutting her off)
Yeah, that's great. Why doesn't he come in?

LAURA
He says that you take the anger you feel for our marriage failing and transfer it on to him.

SCOTT
Brilliant man. A big brain for such a pointy head.

Tim laughs.

LAURA
You all packed, Tim?

TIM
Yup.

LAURA
(to Scott)
I'll call you next week.

SCOTT
Yeah.
(to Tim)
Hey, Sport, I had a great time. I'm really gonna miss you.

TIM
Yeah, me too, Dad.

They hug.

SCOTT
'Bye, Laura.

He gives her a little peck on the cheek. She tries to avoid it.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Thanks for the P.J's.

LAURA
What?

SCOTT
The pajamas. I like 'em.

LAURA
What pajamas?

SCOTT
The red ones.
(to Tim)
Didn't you say Mom picked them out for you?

TIM
You mean the ones with the letters on them?

SCOTT
Yeah.

TIM
I think they're girly.

SCOTT
You said Mom gave them to me.

TIM
Nuh-uh. Judy gave them to you. Up at the North Pole. Don't you remember?

SCOTT
In my dream?

TIM
It was no dream. You and me and the reindeer flying. It was real neat.

(MORE)

TIM (CONT'D)
(to Laura)
It was neat, Mom. Dad was Santa and Bernard showed me the workshop. You should'a been there.

LAURA
Thanks for keeping his feet on the ground.

Neal HONKS the HORN.

Laura and Tim begin to leave.

SCOTT
Wait. Tim? It really happened? It wasn't a dream?

LAURA
Stop it, Scott.
(to Tim)
Go wait in the car, honey. I'll be right there.

TIM
'Bye, Dad.

Tim runs to the car.

LAURA
Confusing the boy isn't in his best interest. Now I know you feel you have some kind of custody case, but you don't. No judge is going to give you custody. Besides, you know he'd be better off with Neal and me.

SCOTT
I'm not trying to confuse the boy.

LAURA
Right. So I get to deal with the day to day responsibilities of raising a kid and you fill his head with Santa trips to the North Pole.

SCOTT
I'm not filling his head with anything. I thought I had a dream. That's all. I never once--

Scott stops in mid-sentence. A stunned look comes over his face. Suddenly, he runs out to the car.

EXT. NEAL'S CAR - DAY

Scott opens the back door where Tim is sitting and sticks his head in the car. NEAL is behind the wheel.

TIM
Hiya, Dad.

NEAL
Scott.

SCOTT
(to Tim)
What you said back there. Who showed you the workshop? Who?

TIM
The elf.

SCOTT
What was his name?

TIM
Bernard.

Laura pulls Scott out of the car.

LAURA
What are you doing? What's wrong?

SCOTT
Tim said "Bernard" showed him the workshop.

LAURA
In the dream?

SCOTT
But I never mentioned Bernard to him.

LAURA
So?

SCOTT
But that was his name.

LAURA
Whose name?

SCOTT
The elf's! His name was Bernard.

NEAL
What's this all about?

TIM
Dad took me to the North Pole and Bernard showed me the workshop.

NEAL
The North Pole?

TIM
He's the new Santa... 'cause the regular Santa fell off our roof and died.

NEAL
(to Laura)
Get in the car, honey.

LAURA
I can't believe you'd do this to your own son.

Scott stands there as she gets in the car. Laura rolls down the window.

LAURA (CONT'D)
And take a shave!

The car drives off.

INT. SCOTT'S OFFICE - DAY

A calendar on the wall tells us that it's January sixth. Scott enters. He still hasn't shaved. His beard is coming in quite nicely. He takes off his coat and buzzes for his secretary.

(MORE)

A WOMAN enters. She is a small woman. Almost elf-like. She looks a lot like Judy.

WOMAN
Yes?

Scott looks at her and stares.

SCOTT
Who are you?

JUDY
Judy. Your secretary.

SCOTT
No you're not. Where's Barbara?

JUDY
On vacation. I'm the temp.

SCOTT
I know you.

JUDY
I don't think so.

SCOTT
Ever been up north?

JUDY
Canada?

SCOTT
Further North?

JUDY
Where?

SCOTT
Never mind.

JUDY
You want the morning mail?

SCOTT
Huh? Yeah. Leave it on the desk.

She does.

JUDY
Can I get you anything?

SCOTT
Coffee.

Judy leaves. Scott looks at his mail. There's only one large envelope. It's addressed to "SC". The postmark is from "The North Pole". Scott opens it.

XCU: THE COVER LETTER

"Please look over this list. Find out who's 'naughty' and who's 'nice'. Check it twice. Yours, Bernard."

BACK TO SCENE

SCOTT
(shouting)
Judy!

Judy enters with a cup.

JUDY
Sorry it took so long.

SCOTT
It wasn't a dream, was it?

Judy puts the cup on the desk. She sits on the chair across from Scott. Her feet don't reach the floor.

JUDY
No. It wasn't.

Scott takes a sip from the cup. He looks up.

JUDY (CONT'D)
Thought you might like some cocoa instead.

SCOTT
It had to have been a dream.

JUDY
I'm telling you, Scott. It wasn't a dream. It happened. Tim knows it happened. In your heart, you know that it's real, too. Look, Scott. Look into your heart. Tell me what you see. Tell me what you feel.

Scott sits and stares off into space. There's an empty look on his face. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, his visage changes. The corners of his mouth twitch slightly then form a sly smile. And his eyes... the only way to describe it is to say that his eyes begin to twinkle. It's at that moment that Scott knows; he knows that it wasn't a dream.

SCOTT
"The Santa Clause." Under the provisions of "The Santa Clause," I'm the new Santa.
(beat)
So, what do I do now?

JUDY
Go over the list.

SCOTT
There must be a thousand pages.

JUDY
Go through the list. Put a "P" next to the names who were nice. A "C" if they were naughty.

SCOTT
Huh?

JUDY
"P". For "Present". "C". For--

SCOTT
"Coal".

JUDY
Right.

SCOTT
How do I know who's nice and who's--

JUDY
Go through the list. You'll know. Check it twice. I'll need it by Friday.

INT. SCOTT'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Scott's beard is a bit heavier. He's got the envelope from the North Pole. He takes out the papers and looks a page one.

XCU: PAGE ONE

There is a list of names. The first name is Aaron, Alan. Next to this name WE SEE Scott mark a "P". The next name is Aaron, Alex. Another "P". Next name is Aaron, Angela. "P". Aaron, Andy. Scott's hand pauses. Slowly, WE SEE him mark a "C".

BACK TO SCENE

Scott continues to go down the list.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Scott ignores it. It RINGS again. Pause. Then a LOUD KNOCK on the door. Finally Scott goes to answer it.

FOYER

Scott opens the door. It's Laura.

LAURA
You really look silly with that beard.

SCOTT
Really? I think it suits me.
(beat)
Was I expecting you?

LAURA
I came to talk about Tim.

SCOTT
Why? He's okay, isn't he?

LAURA
He's fine, until he starts talking about you and the North Pole.

SCOTT
Oh. That.

LAURA
(still in the doorway)
Can I come in?

SCOTT
Yeah, sure.

DINING ROOM

LAURA
Scott, you've got to talk to Tim. Tell him it was all a dream. It's all he talks about.

SCOTT
I don't blame him. Besides, it wasn't a dream. It was a fantastic experience.

LAURA
Scott! This is serious. Neal thinks you've created this little fantasy in Tim's mind so he'd take sides with you over us.

SCOTT
Look, I know this is hard for you and the Head Doctor to understand, but it really happened. I know it and Tim knows it, too. I mean, look at all this stuff. Does this look like I made it up?

Laura looks at all the paper work on the table.

LAURA
What is this?

SCOTT
The list.

LAURA
What list?

SCOTT
You know. "Making a list, checking it twice... gonna find out who's--

LAURA
(angry)
Stop it!

(MORE)

LAURA (CONT'D)
(collecting herself)
Scott. I can see this is hard for you. I'll be very generous with visitation rights. But you're just not gonna get custody of our kid.

SCOTT
This is not about kids! It's about Santa Claus!

Laura starts to leave. She's angry. Scott follows her.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Laura!

LAURA
I don't want to talk about it.

Scott catches up to Laura and takes her arm. He turns her around.

SCOTT
Laura. It really happened. I know it did. When I went up on the roof--

Scott stops talking and just stares.

LAURA
What?

SCOTT
Put on your coat.

EXT. THE ROOF

Scott and Laura are bundled up against the night's chill.

LAURA
This just might be the stupidest thing we've ever done.

Scott is looking around.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Just what is it we're looking for?

SCOTT
Just look.

They continue to search the area.

LAURA
Scott?

SCOTT
You find something?

LAURA
Did you check up here after the roofers finished?

SCOTT
What?

LAURA
Didn't you have the roof repaired last spring?... look at this.

Scott looks at the problem. There are two long scratches running down the length of the roof.

Scott stops suddenly. He looks at the marks. He follows them to the spot where they end. He follows them to the other end. He looks at Laura.

SCOTT
(excited)
The roofers didn't do this. The sleigh did! They're track marks! See. See where they lead? Look! Look up there!

Laura goes to Scott. She looks to where he's pointing.

THEIR POV

From the edge of the roof, where the tracks end, a tree is visible. It's a large oak tree. Through the center of the tree is a large hole. A hole big enough to fit a sleigh through.

BACK TO SCENE

SCOTT (CONT'D)
The sleigh was parked over there. We took off. I had trouble handling it. We went right through that tree. Right through it!

He goes to the other end of the roof.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Look! Here. Hoof marks!

Laura approaches. Scott picks something up that is hanging from the gutter. He shows it to Laura. It's a piece of fur.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
What do you make of this?

LAURA
That? Could be from a squirrel.

Scott opens his hand to reveal the whole piece. It's much to large to be from a squirrel. He shakes the fur. It JINGLES. There is a bell attached to it.

EXT. NEAL AND LAURA'S CAR - DAY

Neal is driving. Laura is sitting next to him.

LAURA
I tell you he really believes it.

NEAL
Honey, it's his way of dealing with this custody battle. He's trying to confuse you. And worse than that... he's trying to confuse Tim, too.

LAURA
But you have to see the lengths he's gone to. Hundreds of pages of names. Tracks on the roof. Fur with jingle bells on it.

NEAL
Laura, I deal with this kind of behavior all the time. The man didn't go got the North Pole. He did go up on the roof and make tracks for you to see. He did get a piece of animal fur and attach a bell to it. He did painstakingly make out a list of a thousand names. If you look at it like that... he seems pretty foolish, doesn't he?

LAURA
What about the hole in the tree?

NEAL
Coincidence. Could have been the wind. I mean, what sounds more plausible: the wind blew out a few branches or eight reindeer pulling a sleigh made the hole?

LAURA
I guess.

NEAL
You guess? The man's playing mind games with you. I'm only going to say this once. Your ex-husband is not Santa Claus.

Laura chuckles.

LAURA
I suppose it does sound silly.

NEAL
Exactly.

LAURA
And you don't think he's dangerous?

NEAL
He's perfectly harmless. Look at it this way. If and when this case gets to court, none of this is going to look very good for him. Trust me, he's not dangerous.

The car comes to a stop in front of a school. They wait for a moment, then Tim enters the car.

TIM
Hiya.

LAURA
Hi, honey.

NEAL
How are you, Tim?

TIM
Fine, I guess.

LAURA
Ready for a nice weekend with your dad?

TIM
You bet.

The drive off.

NEAL
Tim. Did your dad mention what he had planned for you guys?

TIM
I dunno. Maybe see a movie... or play some Nintendo.

NEAL
Sounds like fun.

EXT. A PARK - DAY

Scott and Tim are playing in the snow. After toppling over in a sled they lie there, laughing.

SCOTT
(catching his breath)
Hey, Sport... I got something I wanna show you.

TIM
What?

From his pocket, Scott takes out the piece of fur with the jingle bell on it.

TIM
Hey! That looks like it came from Comet.

SCOTT
I think you're right.
(beat)
Here... listen.

Scott JINGLES THE BELL.

VOICE (OVER)
You rang?

Startled, they both look in the direction of the voice. Standing next to them is Bernard.

BERNARD
Howdy.

Tim runs to him and gives him a hug.

TIM
Hiya, Bernard.

BERNARD
How ya' doing, Sport?

TIM
Great.

BERNARD
Howdy, Santa.

SCOTT
(nodding)
Bernard.

BERNARD
We need you up at the Pole.

SCOTT
Now?

BERNARD
Now's as good a time as any.

SCOTT
Can Tim come, too.

BERNARD
The more the merrier.

Scott looks at Tim. He takes his hand.

SCOTT
You wanna go?

TIM
You betcha'.

SCOTT
(to Bernard)
What are you waiting for? Let's go!

And then... They're gone!

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF SCOTT'S HOUSE - DAY

Neal and Laura are KNOCKING on the door and RINGING the doorbell. There's no answer.

LAURA
He knows we're picking him up now.

NEAL
Don't panic. He probably just lost track of the time.

Laura reaches into her purse and takes out a key. She opens the door. Then enter.

FOYER

LAURA
(calling out)
Tim?
(beat)
Scott?

NEAL
Look.

Sitting in the FOYER is Tim's suitcase. Laura opens it up.

LAURA
It's all packed.

NEAL
See. They know we're coming today.

LAURA
Either that, or...

NEAL
What?

LAURA
I... I don't think this has been unpacked. I mean, I packed for Tim last Friday. I specifically remember putting this shirt on top.

NEAL
What are you saying?

LAURA
(calling out, louder)
Tim?
(pause)
They're not here. They're gone. I know it. He's taken him somewhere. You told me he was harmless. He's taken my baby. Where? Where could he have taken him?
(pause, then louder)
Where?!

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

BIRD'S EYE VIEW

EXT. THE NORTH POLE - DAY

The sun is glistening off the snow. As WE get closer to the ground WE SEE SANTA'S WORKSHOP.

EXT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Bernard, Scott and Tim are there. Scott is dressed as Santa Claus. With his new beard and white hair he looks ... quite the part.

BERNARD
Well! Welcome home.

SCOTT
(Looking at his outfit)
Wow. This feels great!

Judy approaches.

JUDY
Howdy, Sir.

SCOTT
(Happy)
Judy! Hey, I bet Tim could really go for a cup of your cocoa about right now. How 'bout it, Sport?

TIM
(excited)
You bet!

Judy and Tim exit.

SCOTT
(Waiting for them to leave)
Bernard. I gotta talk to you.

BERNARD
Shoot.

SCOTT
I was thinking about what happened to Santa... you know, on my roof... and... the thing is...

BERNARD
I understand.

SCOTT
What?

BERNARD
You're scared.

SCOTT
Well... yeah. What's to stop... me from falling off a roof next year?

BERNARD
Scott. There are no guarantees. We do the best we can.

SCOTT
Well what are my chances? How often do you go through this?

Bernard starts to walk away. Scott follows him to a corner of the room where one wall is lined with about a hundred photos of Santa Claus. Bernard points to the wall of pictures.

SCOTT'S POV

He scans the photos. Each Santa is a different man. Some are even women.

BACK TO SCENE

SCOTT
There have been this many?!

BERNARD
These are just the ones since nineteen hundred.

SCOTT
(shocked)
Nineteen hundred! That's not even one a year. What you're telling me is that I'm sure to buy it.

BERNARD
Not necessarily... well, yeah.

SCOTT
That's it then! I need protection.

BERNARD
And what do you propose?

SCOTT
I don't know. Ropes. Some kind of harness connected to the sleigh.

BERNARD
That'll protect you from falls. But what're you gonna do about getting shot?

SCOTT
Shot?

BERNARD
It happens sometimes. An overprotective homeowner...

SCOTT
I'll... I'll wear a bullet proof vest.

BERNARD
No can do. We've tried that before. You wouldn't be able to get down the chimney. Besides, a vest wouldn't protect you from the planes.

SCOTT
What planes?

BERNARD
Look, try as we might, we can't control the reindeer. Occasionally they veer off course and stray into restricted air space.

SCOTT
Bernard! Come on. Throw me a bone. I really want to do this. I think I'll make a good Santa... Alright. This then. I'll take my chances with the planes, I'll tie a rope to the sleigh and I'll carry a gun.

Bernard gives Scott a look.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Just to protect myself.

BERNARD
And if someone sees you...?

SCOTT
Well... I'll shoot them. I'll be careful... I'll aim for the leg or something. Just to slow them down.

BERNARD
I don't know. I don't think I can have Santa going around shooting people. It wouldn't look good. Santa shooting back? No. I can't let you do that.

SCOTT
Give me some kind of protection, then. Something. Listen, Bernard. You go through a new Santa every year. Wouldn't it be easier if you didn't have to?

Bernard gives this some thought.

BERNARD
(almost to himself)
Mmm. A permanent Santa.

SCOTT
Yeah! A permanent Santa! That's it.

BERNARD
You know, it's so crazy... it just might work.

SCOTT
Sure! It'd be great!

BERNARD
I can't let you carry a gun, though. I'll turn it over to the research department. Let me see what the elves come up with.

INT. NEAL MILLER'S OFFICE - DAY

Neal is at his desk filling out some forms. Laura is sitting across from him.

LAURA
He's my ex-husband. The father of my son. I don't know if I can do this. I don't have the right to commit him... do I?

NEAL
You're Tim's mother. You have the right to protect him.

LAURA
You told me he wasn't in any danger--

NEAL
Tim will be fine. Understand Scott's delusion. He thinks he's Santa Claus. Now ask yourself this: would Santa hurt an eight year old boy? Trust me. Sign the papers.

He offers her the papers. She signs where he indicates.

LAURA
Now what?

NEAL
We present these to a judge. If he agrees...

Laura bows her head. She begins to cry.

NEAL (CONT'D)
Scott will be well taken care of. The Urbisci Institute is the best there is. Believe me, this is the only way.

The intercom BUZZES.

NEAL (CONT'D)
(into intercom)
I told you I didn't want to be interrupted--

INTERCOM VOICE (OVER)
I know, Doctor. But... there's a... man to see you. He says it's urgent.

NEAL
Tell him to wait. I'm--

INTERCOM VOICE (OVER)
He says you'd want to see him--

BERNARD (OVER)
(from intercom)
It's family business. It's about Scott and Tim.

NEAL
Send him in.

Bernard enters. He's not wearing his "elf" outfit. He's dressed in a business suit. Neal and Laura try not to react to his size.

NEAL (CONT'D)
Come in Mr...?

BERNARD
Bernard. Call me "Bernard".

NEAL
Bernard. What do you know about Scott and Tim?

BERNARD
They're fine.

LAURA
What have you done with my baby, you little--

NEAL
Laura! Please. Let's hear what Bernard has to say.

BERNARD
Thanks, Doc. They're fine. That's it. See ya'.

He begins to leave.

NEAL
Wait!

Bernard stops and turns.

BERNARD
Yeah?

NEAL
Can we please talk.

BERNARD
Sure.

Bernard sits on the chair next to Laura. His feet don't reech the floor. He smiles at her.

LAURA
Who are you?

BERNARD
I told you. I'm Bernard.

NEAL
Where you from?

BERNARD
Up North.

NEAL
Canada?

BERNARD
Further north.

NEAL
What do you do?

BERNARD
Huh?

NEAL
For a living?

BERNARD
I help out.

NEAL
Help out?

BERNARD
Yeah. I'm a helper.

NEAL
You wouldn't perhaps be... one of Santa's helpers, would you?

Bernard approaches the desk and stares at Neal.

BERNARD
I suggest you not get mixed up in this.

NEAL
Do you realize how sick a man Scott is?

BERNARD
He's not sick. And I'd stop with this commitment business if I were you.

NEAL
How do you know about--

BERNARD
I have my ways. Now, why don't you just forget about Scott and Tim. They'll be alright. Don't cause trouble... or else!

NEAL
Or else, what?

BERNARD
You don't want to mess with me.

NEAL
Why not?

BERNARD
Because deep down you know who I am. And if you know who I am, you must know what I'm capable of.

NEAL
Are you threatening me, Bernard?

BERNARD
Let's just call it, "elfish advice".

NEAL
And what are to be the consequences if I don't heed this... advice?

BERNARD
You don't want to know.

NEAL
Try me.

Bernard gets off the chair and climbs up on the doctor's desk. He crawls across the desk and faces the doctor, eye to eye. Bernard scowls. He reaches into his pocket and takes something out. Slowly, deliberately he holds out his closed hand.

CLOSE ON BERNARD'S HAND

As he opens his hand what's inside is revealed. There, cradled in the palm of Bernard's small hand, is a lump of coal.

BACK TO SCENE

Neal stares at the lump of coal. Laura stands up to see what it is. She too, stares at it. Bernard just laughs.

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Bernard and Judy are leading Scott and Tim who are both blindfolded.

SCOTT
When can we look?

TIM
I'm so excited.

BERNARD
Keep your shorts on. We're almost there.

They come to a side door in the WORKSHOP. They open the door and enter.

INT. THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Now!

Scott and Tim take off the blindfolds. They look around, amazed.

THEIR POV

Santa's Sleigh is in the center of the large cavernous room. A series of pulleys and hoists are surrounding it. Around the perimeter of the room are many alcoves where ELVES are working on elaborate projects. It's easy to picture if you think of James Bond's Q Branch. Bernard is M, Scott is 007 and the ELVES are the best that British Intelligence has to offer.

BACK TO SCENE

TIM
Wow!

BERNARD
I gotta hand it to them. They outdid themselves. This is some of the best work that's come out of the workshop since Nintendo.

SCOTT
What is it all? What're they doing?

BERNARD
It's what you asked for. You want to be the permanent Santa... you got it!

QUINTIN, AN ELF, approaches them. Bernard makes the introductions.

BERNARD
Santa... this is Quintin, head of Research and Development.

SCOTT
(nodding)
Quintin.

Quintin wipes his hands on a rag and extends it to Scott. Quintin speaks in an English accent.

QUINTIN
Howdy do, Santa. Have I got a sleigh for you. Follow me.

The rest of this scene, FOLLOW as Quintin takes them on the tour.

QUINTIN (CONT'D)
You gave us quite a problem. It's not in our nature to hurt people. In fact, it's contrary to our very being. So most of what we've done is defensive.

Quintin puts a new hat on Scott.

QUINTIN (CONT'D)
Ok... tell me what you hear.

SCOTT
Sounds like your inside my head. How'd you...

QUINTIN
Your hat is lined with a two way radio. Everything I say will sound like that. The transmitter's in there, too. You just talk, I'll hear you. Look at this.

They come to the sleigh. Quintin JINGLES THE BELLS.

QUINTIN (CONT'D)
Sounds the same. But we've added an extra frequency that will jam most modern radar. These bells will render you virtually invisible.

Quintin lifts up the seat.

QUINTIN (CONT'D)
This device will emit a signal that's exactly the same as a Boeing 767. In the event that the bells don't work and you are detected, you'll look like a commercial airliner. They won't shoot you down as a UFO first and ask questions later.

SCOTT
That's happened?

QUINTIN
'Couple of times. This is a special frequency radio. Nobody will be able to tap into it. We'll monitor the entire flight from Command Central. You'll be in constant contact with me except for the last two minutes of the flight.

SCOTT
Why's that?

QUINTIN
The trajectory takes you directly over the Magnetic Pole. We'll lose radio contact. We've plotted a course to allow for minimum down time.
(MORE)

QUINTIN (CONT'D)
A two minute black out is the best we could do. Come here, look at this.

He moves to the back of the sleigh and points to three pipes under the carriage.

QUINTIN (CONT'D)
New this year. Smoke screen.

INT. POLICE SITUATION ROOM - NIGHT

DETECTIVE NUNZIO is addressing a GROUP OF POLICE OFFICERS. Nunzio stands behind a podium and in front of a projection screen.

DETECTIVE NUNZIO
Next slide...

A picture of Tim comes on the screen.

DETECTIVE NUNZIO (CONT'D)
This is the victim... Timothy Calvin. Caucasian male, eight years old, light brown hair, fifty-four inches tall, sixty-two pounds. Missing since February twenty-fourth. Last seen in the company of his father, Scott Calvin... slide.

A picture of Scott comes on the screen.

DETECTIVE NUNZIO (CONT'D)
You've all got this picture and a description of the alleged perpetrator. Now, on the behest of the boy's mother... we have Doctor Neal Miller here to fill you in on a psychiatric profile of Calvin. Doctor Miller is a noted psychiatrist and also the fiance of the victim's mother. Doctor Miller.

Neal takes his place at the podium.

NEAL
On or about last Christmas Eve, Scott Calvin got it in his mind that he was Santa Claus.

There's a burst of laughter from the audience. Nunzio stands up to silence them.

DETECTIVE NUNZIO
Knock it off!

A POLICEMAN
Hey, Nunzio? Why don't we just follow Rudolph's nose to track the perp?

More laughter.

DETECTIVE NUNZIO
Can it, Malone. A boy's missing, for god's sake. This ain't no joke.

The crowd is silenced. Neal continues.

NEAL
About a week ago, Mrs. Calvin received a phone call from her son. We taped the call. I'd like you to hear it.

Neal turns on a cassette player. The faces of the audience is PANNED as the tape plays.

LAURA (OVER)
Hello?

TIM (OVER)
Mom?

LAURA (OVER)
Tim! Honey, where are you? Are you alright?

TIM (OVER)
I'm fine. Dad and I are at the North Pole...
(static)
... to protect himself. Bernard says Dad could be the permanent...
(static)
... next Christmas.

LAURA (OVER)
What? I don't understand. Where are you?

TIM (OVER)
It's great up here. We're having...
(static)
... elves need me. Gotta go.

LAURA (OVER)
Tim! Wait. Where are you?

There's a pause while Laura waits for a response. She answered only by static.

Neal turns off the recorder.

NEAL
We're dealing with a man who is so sure that he's Santa Claus, that he's been able to convince his son of it, too. Not only that... but he truly believes that he's at the North Pole... with the elves.

MALONE
The North Pole? Hey, Nunzio, isn't that a bit out of our jurisdiction?

Laughter.

DETECTIVE NUNZIO
Alright, Malone, that's enough. Doc here's got a plan. Go 'head, sir.

NEAL
I don't think Scott is anywhere around here. In fact, I really believe that he's as close to the North Pole as he could get... probably somewhere in Canada or Alaska. Finding him is out of the question. My plan is that we wait for him to come to us.

MALONE
You wouldn't happen to know about when that would be, would you, Doc?

NEAL
As a matter of fact I know exactly when it would be. Scott will be back on Christmas Eve. He'll most likely have Tim with him. His ex-wife and I've been naughty in Scott's mind. He'll show up at my house on Christmas Eve. He has to. He must give us our lumps of coal, for Christmas.

More laughter.

NEAL (CONT'D)
(over the laughter)
Laugh if you must... but I'm sure of it. Scott Calvin will be at my house on Christmas Eve. As to where he is now... I have no idea. I only know that believing he's Santa... it's someplace warm and cozy.

INT. SANTA RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER - NIGHT

TWO ELVES fire up some flame throwers and fire at a full size mannequin dressed in a Santa suit. It's a raging inferno, but the suit remains in tact.

QUINTIN
Your new suit. The piece de resistance. For the first time it's completely flame retardant. And it will stop a bullet up to .38 caliber.

AN ELF unloads a round into it. Not a mark on it.

BERNARD
Quintin? That's incredible. How'd you--

QUINTIN
Judy came up with it. It's a new fabric... light, durable yet flexible enough to allow for full descension and ascension.

SCOTT
I hate to criticize, but what if the bullet is bigger than a .38?

QUINTIN
We're working on it.

Tim goes to the suit. He reaches out to touch it. He feels one of the pom-poms.

QUINTIN (CONT'D)
Careful! Don't touch anything until I tell you it's ok.

TIM
Sorry.

Quintin pulls off one of the pom-poms and looks at a GROUP OF ELVES working across the way. He lobs the pom-pom in their direction. Upon landing, it explodes silently making a deep fog. When the fog lifts, the Elves are all laying on the ground.

SCOTT
My god, are they...

QUINTIN
Don't worry. They'll wake up in the morning. They'll feel great. They won't remember a thing. Use 'em in the event that someone spots you.

They cross to a large table. There is a miniature neighborhood set up. On one of the roofs is a model of the newly equipped sleigh.

QUINTIN (CONT'D)
Here's something we're still working on. We're trying to give the reindeer less of a work load. The new sleigh weighs a lot more than the unprotected model. We figure if they can achieve vertical take-off and landing it'll save a lot of wear and tear. Look.

Quintin nods to Larry, at the table. Larry throws a switch and puts on a pair of goggles.

LARRY
Here. You better wear these.

He hands out goggles to the spectators. They don them. Slowly the mini-sleigh begins to rise straight up.

QUINTIN
The reindeer won't have to do a gallop take-off and horizontal landing each time.

As it rises, it begins to shake.

QUINTIN (CONT'D)
This will allow them to save their strength for the actual flying.

The model shakes some more and begins to lose altitude. As it starts to descend, it EXPLODES. All that is left in the model neighborhood is a miniature mushroom cloud.

LARRY
We should have the bugs out by Christmas Eve.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POLICE SITUATION ROOM - EARLY EVENING (CHRISTMAS EVE)

Detective Nunzio is briefing his S.W.A.T FORCE.

DETECTIVE NUNZIO
That's it, then. We'll cordon off a three block radius around Doctor Miller's house. Unit A will be posted on the roof. Calvin is to be apprehended unharmed. He'll probably be dressed like Santa Claus, so check every Santa you see.
(beat)
Well. That's it, gentlemen. Merry Christmas.

The force disperses.

INT. NEAL AND LAURA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (CHRISTMAS EVE)

The Christmas tree is fully lit as is the fire place. Neal is having a drink. Laura pokes at the fire.

NEAL (CONT'D)
Don't do that. I want the fire to go out.

LAURA
Why?

NEAL
I'm pretty sure that Scott will try to use the fireplace. He must complete the scenario.

LAURA
He'll try to come down the chimney?

NEAL
Anything's possible at this point. Our job is to detain him long enough to convince him to give himself up. We've got to get him to admit that he's not Santa Claus. Whatever it takes, he must not leave once he gets here.

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Santa is addressing the Elves.

SANTA
Before I leave, I just want to say that the past year has meant a lot to Tim and myself.

APPLAUSE.

SANTA (CONT'D)
I know you've all done your best. Let the word go out from this day on that a new generation is upon us. A generation born in this century. My safe return will mark a milestone.

APPLAUSE.

SANTA (CONT'D)
No more will you have to deal with a new Santa every year. From now on, you've got your Santa Claus. And I hope and pray that I'll be here... FOREVER!

WILD APPLAUSE.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Now let's have a great Christmas Eve!

The elves pat him on the back and give him encouragement as Santa, Tim and Bernard pass through the crowd.

BERNARD
Hell of a speech.

SANTA
I meant every word. I love being here.

BERNARD
Look... I... I want you to know...

SANTA
Bernard. You don't have to say it. I know that nothing's fool-proof. You've given it your best shot. I'll be ok.

BERNARD
I sure as hell hope so.

EXT. SANTA'S HANGAR - NIGHT

It's desolate. The snow is being blown about. The night sky is clear and ablaze with starlight. In the distance three figures approach. As they get closer WE SEE that they are Santa, Tim and Bernard. They stop in front of the large hangar door. A nervous SILENCE surrounds them.

BERNARD
How do you feel?

SANTA
Good. I feel good. Everything ready?

BERNARD
Quintin's finishing up. Everything's a go. We're right on time.

SANTA
Yeah. Good... I feel good...

TIM
(upset)
I wanna go, too! I went last year. I wanna go.

SANTA
Come on, Sport, Quintin explained it to us. We have to keep the weight down. Besides, it might be too dangerous this year.

TIM
(pouting)
I wanna go.

Tim runs back to the WORKSHOP, still upset.

BERNARD
He'll be okay.

SANTA
I know.
(beat)
How 'bout me?

BERNARD
You'll be great.

SANTA
I'm a little nervous.

BERNARD
That's only natural.

Santa gets down on his knees and gives Bernard a hug. It's a peaceful, less nervous moment. Suddenly, there's the sound of a LOUD ALARM.

A yellow light comes on and the door to the hangar slowly begins to open. As it does, the intense colorful lights from inside begin to pour out. Bernard and Santa step back out of the way.

THEIR POV

The door is now open. Inside, WE SEE the reindeer and sleigh. HUNDREDS OF ELVES are there. It's a swarm of activity. Quintin sits in the sleigh and gently pulls on the reins. The reindeer slowly move outside. The sleigh looks sleeker than it did last year. It comes to a stop.

BACK TO SCENE

Santa goes up to the reindeer.

SANTA
How you doing, Comet?

He rubs Comet's nose. Comet snuggles up to Santa. Santa reaches into his pocket and gives Comet a sugar cube. He goes and pets the rest of the eight.

SANTA (CONT'D)
How you guys doing?

The reindeer are happy to see their boss. Santa moves to the sleigh. He helps Quintin down.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Looks good, Quintin.

QUINTIN
Thanks.

Santa gets up in the sleigh.

QUINTIN (CONT'D)
Hold 'em back the first hour or so. They need to get used to the heavier load.

SANTA
Check.

QUINTIN
I've set the radio frequency. If you need to change it...

SANTA
We've been through it all, Quintin. You've taught me well, old friend. I know what to do.

QUINTIN
You'll be just fine.

SANTA
With you on my team, how can I lose?

QUINTIN
Whenever you're ready.

Santa takes a hold of the reins. The reindeer are ready to go.

SANTA
Easy, boys. Now Dasher. Now Dancer. Now Prancer and Vixen.

QUINTIN
See you in the morning.

SANTA
(to Quintin)
You can count on that.
(beat)
On Comet! On Cupid! On Donder and Blitzen!

The sleigh slowly begins to move out.

Santa lets out a hardy "HO! HO! HO!" as the sleigh takes of into the brilliant night sky.

QUINTIN
Alright, everybody. It's gonna be a long night. To your posts.

The elves scatter.

EXT. SANTA'S SLEIGH - NIGHT

Santa, in his sleigh, is flying smoothly along.

QUINTIN (OVER)
Testing... testing... do you read me?

SANTA
Ho, ho! Loud and clear, Quintin. Wow, you scared me. I thought you were in the sleigh for a minute. The sound's great!

QUINTIN (OVER)
You're looking good from here...

INT. CONTROL CENTRAL - NIGHT

Quintin is at The Control Panel. A large screen tracks the progress of the trip. Quintin takes out a small black leather case and opens it. It looks like the kind of case you'd keep cigars in, but Quintin takes out a lollipop. He offers one to Bernard. Bernard declines. Quintin unwraps it and begins to lick.

QUINTIN (CONT'D)
... You might want to ease up a bit on the altitude. Bring 'em up slower.

SANTA (OVER)
Roger. I tell you, though, they want to fly.

QUINTIN
Sure, now. But you got a whole evening ahead of you. I just want to make sure they have enough juice to get you back.

SANTA (OVER)
Hey, put Tim on... I wanna tell him something.

INTERCUT:

THE SLEIGH

QUINTIN (OVER)
Uh... he's still a bit upset...

SANTA
Where is he?

Tim pops up from behind the bag of toys.

TIM
(joyfully)
Here I am. Hiya, Dad!

SANTA
Why you little...

QUINTIN (OVER)
What's going on there?

SANTA
Seems like I'm gonna have some company this trip. We've got a stowaway.

QUINTIN (OVER)
Tim? He's there with you?

SANTA
Ho, ho, ho! I suppose I could use the help. It'll be okay.

The sleigh bounces about.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Whoa!

QUINTIN (OVER)
(concerned)
What was that?

SANTA
I don't know... we hit an air pocket or something. Gave us quite a jolt. Everything's alright.

WORKSHOP

An Elf approaches Quintin.

ELF
I'm getting a weird reading on the tracking. That last bump might have shaken something loose.

QUINTIN
What? What kind of reading?

ELF
I don't know. It's like a double image. Like there's two sleighs out there.

QUINTIN
No. That's the radar jamming device. Something's picking him up.
(into microphone)
Santa, do you read me?

SANTA (OVER)
What's up, Quintin?

QUINTIN
You're being tracked.

THE SLEIGH

QUINTIN (OVER)
The jamming device is causing a double image. It's not blacking you out. Use the bells more.

Santa jingles the bells.

INT. AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - NIGHT

CONTROLLER
Will the unidentified 767 please respond... Unidentified 767 please respond... Head left seven-niner... Please respond.

The controller waits and is answered by static.

INT. WORKSHOP

QUINTIN
Keep it up. You'll be out of their air space soon. It's working fine. Turn left heading seven-niner.

INT. CONTROL TOWER

CONTROLLER
Unidentified 767 we have no radio contact... keep on current heading...
(MORE)

CONTROLLER (CONT'D)
(to another controller)
They apparently hear us but can't talk. Mark them as unresponsive, they'll be out of our sector soon.

THE SLEIGH

Santa is still frantically jingling the bells.

SANTA
Ho, ho ho! Way to go, Quintin.

QUINTIN (OVER)
Alright, you're clear. Ease up on the bells and continue on as scheduled. You'll be making your first stop soon.

The sleigh continues on its flight.

EXT. THE STREET BY NEAL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A MAN DRESSED LIKE SANTA is walking down the street carrying a large bag. Suddenly, FIVE S.W.A.T. TEAM MEMBERS converge on him. The hold him at gun-point.

S.W.A.T. ONE
Freeze! Don't give me a reason.

The man drops his bag and raises his arms in the air.

One of the squad members cautiously approaches the Santa, while the others remain poised to fire.

SANTA MAN
I... I have receipts for all this stuff--

S.W.A.T. ONE
(sternly)
Save it, Saint Nick! Now put your hands up on that car and spread 'em.

Santa complies. He's searched. The officer finds a wallet and takes out a driver's license. He reads it.

S.W.A.T TWO
What're you doing out here dressed like Santa, Mr. Rutledge?

RUTLEDGE
(a bit confused)
I... well, it's Christmas...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A COUPLE lays asleep in bed. A NOISE is heard. THE HUSBAND wakes with a start.

HUSBAND
Whaa...?

THE WIFE wakes up.

WIFE
What is it?

HUSBAND
I heard something.

THE NOISE again.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)
There! What is that?

WIFE
Someone's in the living room.

The husband gets out of bed.

WIFE (CONT'D)
I'm calling the police.

HUSBAND
Wait!

He goes to the closet and gets out a golf bag. He chooses a club, pauses for a beat and then chooses a different club.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)
I'll handle this. You make sure the kids are alright.

He sneaks out of the room, the club poised for an attack.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Santa is by the tree putting out the last of the gifts. He stops and takes a drink of milk that was left for him. He hears A NOISE and freezes. He slowly moves to hide behind the tree. The husband sneaks into the room. He turns on the light. Santa comes out from behind the tree.

SANTA
Hi.

HUSBAND
Who are you?

SANTA
I'm Santa Claus. You can put down the golf club, I won't hurt you.

HUSBAND
What are you doing here?

SANTA
I'm leaving some gifts for Pete and Julie.

HUSBAND
How do you know my kids?

SANTA
They wrote me. Here.

Santa hands him a present.

HUSBAND
What's this?

SANTA
They wanted me to bring you a tie. It's red. I hope you like it.

The wife, PETE AND JULIE come into the living room.

WIFE
Harold?

HUSBAND
It's ok. Stay outta here.

PETE
It's Santa!

Pete starts to run to Santa, but Harold stops him.

HUSBAND
You stay with me, Pete.

PETE
Santa? Did you bring me...

SANTA
... The dump truck? You betcha.

PETE
Yay!

SANTA
Hi, Julie.

Julie is younger than Pete and is shy.

SANTA (CONT'D)
It was nice meeting you folks.
I gotta be going now.

PETE
Did you have some milk, Santa?

SANTA
Oh, Indeed I did, Pete. I love milk. Mind if I take some of these apples?

PETE
Sure! They're for the reindeer.

SANTA
Great. They love apples.

HUSBAND
(suspiciously)
Who are you?

SANTA
You know who I am.

Santa pulls a pom-pom off of his suit.

SANTA (CONT'D)
You folks have a Merry, Merry Christmas. Ho, ho, ho!

He lobs the pom-pom in their direction. There's a puff a smoke. When the smoke clears the family is peacefully asleep on the floor. Santa is gone.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POLICE LINE-UP ROOM - NIGHT

Seven Santas, of varying heights, are in the line-up. Laura is behind a glass partition looking at them.

DETECTIVE NUNZIO
Take your time.

LAURA
I don't know... no... he's not there.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANOTHER LIVING ROOM

Santa is again by the tree finishing up when the lights come on suddenly. Santa looks up with a start. A MAN, holding a gun is there.

SANTA
Hi.

MAN
Who the hell are you?

SANTA
I'm Santa--

MAN
Shut up! Away from the tree. Slowly! Put your hands up.

Santa complies.

MAN (CONT'D)
What's in the bag?

SANTA
Presents.

MAN
(points gun at Santa)
Do you know what this is?

SANTA
It's a gun.

MAN
You're wrong. It's a .44 Magnum. It's the most powerful hand weapon there is.

SANTA
I'm impressed. Gonna shoot me?

MAN
It's three o'clock in the morning. You're dressed up like Santa Claus and you're sneaking around my living room carrying a large bag. You're damn right I'll shoot you.

SANTA
You don't have to. I was just going.

MAN
The only place you're going is to jail.

The man carefully reaches for the phone, still pointing the gun at Santa.

The man looks at the phone for an instant. Santa makes another move for a pom-pom. The man looks up and sees that Santa is moving.

MAN (CONT'D)
(terrified)
Don't!

The man fires the gun. It makes a LOUD NOISE. In a flash, Santa moves his hand. The man and Santa both freeze. Santa puts out his hand and slowly opens it. Inside, is a .44 bullet. The man is stunned. Santa reaches for a pom- pom with his other hand and lobs it. In the ensuing fog, Santa leaves.

EXT. THE ROOF

Santa gets in the sleigh.

QUINTIN (OVER)
You ok?

SANTA
That .44 scared me for a minute. Tell Judy that the lead lined gloves work great. I'm outta here.

The sleigh does an effortless vertical take-off and then the reindeer take over. They fly off.

QUINTIN (OVER)
That's a wrap, boss. Bring it on home.

SANTA
Not quite. I have one more stop.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

The sleigh is parked on the other side of the roof, out of sight. Santa is about to descend the chimney.

VOICE (OVER)
(harshly)
Freeze!

Santa turns and sees four S.W.A.T. OFFICERS who have him surrounded.

SANTA
Merry Christmas, fellas.

OFFICER ONE
Not for you, buddy. Now, nice and easy... put your hands up against the chimney and spread 'em.

Santa reaches for a pom-pom but is stopped by an officer who grabs Santa. In the struggle, Santa's hat falls off. Finally, The officer gets Santa by the arms and handcuffs him.

OFFICER TWO
Got him!

OFFICER ONE
(in walkie-talkie)
We're bringing him down. Hold your fire.

INT. NEAL AND LAURA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Santa is ushered in, still in handcuffs.

OFFICER ONE
Have a seat, Santa.

He pushes Santa to the couch. Neal and Laura enter.

SANTA
Neal. Laura. You should be asleep.

LAURA
Where's my baby?

SANTA
Don't you even want to know what I brought you for Christmas?

The front door opens. AN OFFICER enters with Tim.

LAURA
Tim!

TIM
(running to Santa)
Let him go! Let him go!

He runs to Santa and hugs him.

Santa whispers quietly in Tim's ear.

SANTA
Get to the sleigh. Find my hat. Contact Quintin. Tell him to deploy E.L.F.S.

Laura comes to them and takes Tim away.

LAURA
Honey, I was so worried. Where have you been?

TIM
You gotta let him go, Mom. He's gotta get back.

NEAL
Back where?

TIM
The North Pole.

OFFICER ONE
We'll take him into custody now.

The officers escort Santa out.

LAURA
Tim, let me look at you. You've been gone almost a year. Tell us. Tell us where you've been. Where did he take you?

NEAL
Easy, Laura. Let the boy collect his thoughts.
(beat)
Come here, Tim.

Tim complies. He stands right in front of Neal who sits on the couch.

NEAL (CONT'D)
Did you have a good time?

TIM
You bet.

NEAL
You were up at the North Pole?

TIM
Uh-huh.

NEAL
Lotta elves up there, I bet.

TIM
'Bout a thousand.

NEAL
Let me ask you this. How'd you and your dad get here tonight?

Tim thinks about how to answer for a minute.

TIM
Let me ask you this. How does this feel?

Tim gives Neal a quick kick in the shin and runs out the door. In an instant... he's gone.

INT. WORKSHOP - NIGHT

QUINTIN
What the hell's going on? Where's Santa?

ELF
He's down at the Miller's.

QUINTIN
(in microphone)
Get out of there, Santa. Get out of there now!

CUT TO:

EXT. NEAL'S ROOF - NIGHT

CLOSE ON:

Santa's hat, with the small voice of Quintin coming out if it.

QUINTIN (OVER)
Now. Get out of there now...

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Detective Nunzio is grilling Santa.

DETECTIVE NUNZIO
Alright, let's go through it again, Calvin. What's your name?

SANTA
Santa Claus.

DETECTIVE NUNZIO
And where--

SANTA
I was born in Chicago, but I now reside on the North Pole. I don't have a phone... but you can write me. "Santa Claus, North Pole"... it'll get to me.

DETECTIVE NUNZIO
Think you're pretty cute, huh?

SANTA
I have my days.

DETECTIVE NUNZIO
You think you're helping your kid with all this nonsense?

SANTA
He was up there with me... he knows it's not nonsense.

DETECTIVE NUNZIO
Well, I hate to be the Grinch who stole Christmas, but I'm gonna lock you up. Maybe a couple of weeks in the slammer will make you a more cooperative prisoner.

SANTA
I appreciate your hospitality, but I'm afraid I'm going to have to be leaving you soon.

Nunzio opens the door and shouts down the hall.

DETECTIVE NUNZIO
Someone get in here and lock this clown up!

EXT. NEAL'S ROOF - NIGHT

The reindeer are getting restless. The top of a ladder is suddenly visible. Tim climbs to the roof. He goes to the sleigh and looks in. He looks around the roof and sees Santa's hat. He picks it up and puts it on.

QUINTIN (OVER)
Damnit, where the hell is he?

TIM
Quintin?

QUINTIN (OVER)
Who is that-- Tim?

TIM
Yeah.

CONTROL CENTRAL

QUINTIN
Where's Santa?

TIM (OVER)
The police got him. He's all tied up. He wants you to ploy Elfs. What's that mean?

QUINTIN
Hang in there, Tim. You wait where you are.
(to Bernard)
Alright, Bernard, let's see how good your security is.
(dramatic beat)
Deploy E.L.F.S.!

Bernard sounds a LOUD ALARM. A GROUP OF FIVE ELVES emerge from a back room. Over the door of the room is a sign that reads: "Effective Liberating Force Squad." The first letters spelling out: "E.L.F.S."

BERNARD
(to E.L.F.S.)
Alright boys... you're on.

And in a flash... they're gone.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

It's quiet. The DESK SERGEANT sits up high behind the counter. The front door opens... then closes as if by itself. The sergeant looks up and sees no one.

E.L.F.S. ONE (OVER)
We're looking for Santa Claus. Is he here?

The sergeant looks down in front of the desk. Standing there is the E.L.F.S.

DESK SERGEANT
Go home, kids. Visiting hours are over.

E.L.F.S. ONE
We're not kids... and we're not visiting.

The Elves head towards the back.

DESK SERGEANT
Hey! You can't go back there.

E.L.F.S. ONE
Yeah? Who's gonna stop us?

DESK SERGEANT
Alright, game's over. Out you go.

The sergeant goes to grab one of the Elves. The Elves each take a pom-pom and lob them at the Sarge. When the smoke clears, the Sergeant is out cold and the E.L.F.S. are gone.

EXT. NEAL'S ROOF

Tim is sitting against the chimney huddled up against the cold night air. Santa and the E.L.F.S. appear.

SANTA
Hey, Sport.

TIM
Dad!

They embrace. Tim notices the E.L.F.S.

TIM (CONT'D)
Who're they?

SANTA
They came to help.
(to E.L.F.S.)
You did good work, men.

E.L.F.S. ONE
Wish you could come back with us.

SANTA
Someone's gotta bring back the sleigh.

E.L.F.S. ONE
Well... see you up north, Sir.

And then, they're gone.

TIM
Let's go, Dad, I'm freezing.

SANTA
Come here, Sport.

Tim goes to his father.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Let's go inside and talk to your mom and Neal.

TIM
Can I go down the chimney with you.

Santa looks and sees the ladder on the side of the house.

SANTA
We better take the rose suchak ladder.

Tim laughs.

INT. NEAL'S LIVING ROOM

Santa and Tim enter. Neal is on the couch. Laura is pacing.

LAURA
Tim!

She runs to him.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Don't run off like that again.

TIM
Sorry.

Neal and Laura look at Santa.

LAURA
I thought the police had you.

NEAL
They let you go?

TIM
Nuh-uh. The elves helped him.

Neal and Laura look at each other.

SANTA
Look, I don't have much time. They'll be coming after me again. I'm sorry if I worried you. Tim's fine. He's a good boy.

NEAL
Scott. Let's talk about the way you're dressed. Do you really think--

SANTA
Not now, Doc. I am who I am. I'm happy this way. Tim knows.

TIM
You bet.

SANTA
The thing is... I don't think Tim should come back with me.

TIM
Dad!

SANTA
Come here, Sport.
(Tim does)
It's no life for you up there. Now that Bernard and Quintin have things worked out, I'll be real busy getting ready for next year. I won't have time to look after you properly.

Santa looks at Neal and Laura.

SANTA (CONT'D)
They will. Mom loves you and Neal... well he's okay, too. You'll be much better off here.

TIM
(through his tears)
But I wanna be with you.

SANTA
I know, Sport. I wanna be with you, too. But we both know you'd be better off here.

TIM
What about Christmas. I was a big help to you tonight. You need me. You really do.

SANTA
Hey, Sport. You think I'd try to do this next year without you?

TIM
You mean it?

SANTA
You be good this year and come next Christmas you'll be riding shotgun... just like tonight.

TIM
Alright!

Tim and Santa hug each other.

TIM (CONT'D)
(softly, in Santa's ear)
I love you, Dad.

SANTA
I love you, too, Sport.

Santa turns to Laura.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Laura. All I ask is that I can have Tim Thanksgiving to Christmas Eve. What'd you say?

LAURA
You really expect me to give custody to a man who thinks he's Santa Claus?

SANTA
Don't be so naughty. Think about it. I'll have my attorney, Bernard, send you the paper work. I guarantee, none of this will mean anything to you tomorrow.

LAURA
You expect me to forget about all this?

SANTA
You bet.

With that, he pulls off one of his pom-poms and lobs it toward the couch. When the smoke clears, he's gone.

EXT. NEAL'S ROOF - NIGHT

Santa finds his hat and gets in the sleigh.

SANTA
Santa calling Quintin... Santa calling--

QUINTIN (OVER)
Well, where the hell have you been?

SANTA
Jail.

QUINTIN (OVER)
Everything okay?

SANTA
Yup.

Santa jingles the reins and the sleigh takes off.

INT. CONTROL CENTRAL- NIGHT

SANTA (OVER)
Hey, is Bernard there?... put him on.

BERNARD
Right here, Boss.

SANTA (OVER)
The E.L.F.S. turned out to be a crackerjack squad.

BERNARD
Glad to hear it. I'll tell them.

SANTA (OVER)
Listen, Bernard. I need you to draft a letter to my wife for custody of Tim next Thanksgiving. Think you can handle it?

BERNARD
Piece of cake.
(beat, then saddly)
Then he's not coming back with you?

SANTA (OVER)
We'll see him next year... and every year. Heck, when I get too old for the job we'll let him take over!

BERNARD
I'll put that in the "Santa Clause."

SANTA (OVER)
Well. I'm heading in. See you in the morning. Santa out.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CONTROL CENTRAL - DAWN

Quintin takes off his headset and rubs his eyes. The rest of the elves relax, too. It's been a long night and they're all showing signs of fatigue.

BERNARD
Hell of a night.

QUINTIN
You said it.

Quintin takes out another lollipop.

SFX: A LOUD ALARM.

BERNARD
My god, what's that?

Quintin puts on the headset, quickly.

QUINTIN
Santa, do you read me? Santa--

SANTA (OVER)
(with grave concern)
Quintin... I read... I think...
Whoa, boy... We've been hit!
Looks like a... maybe an F-15...
can't tell...

QUINTIN
Damage report?

SANTA (OVER)
We're still flying...
sluggish... going to...
(static)
... read me...?

QUINTIN
You're breaking up... switch
over to emergency frequency...
repeat, emergency frequency!

EXT. THE SLEIGH

Santa is trying hard to control the reindeer, but they're flying wildly. The sleigh is bobbing and weaving. Santa has no apparent control.

SANTA
I can't read you, Quintin. I'm
gonna switch over to emergency
frequency...

Santa moves some dials around on the control panel.

QUINTIN (OVER)
... to emergency frequency...
repeat, switch--

SANTA
Got it! I read you, Quintin.

QUINTIN (OVER)
Damage report.

SANTA
F-15's. Still in pursuit. Jamming signal isn't working and they made visual contact before I could set the bells!

QUINTIN (OVER)
Activate the smoke screen and execute the emergency diagonal decent. Do you remember...

SANTA
Roger!

Smoke begins to pour out of the rear of the sleigh. At the same time the reindeer begin a sharp diagonal decent. Overhead, the F-15 continues to fly on and is soon out of sight.

QUINTIN (OVER)
Now! Hit the jamming sequence, now!

SANTA
They're too fast. I see him coming 'round. I'm gonna go lower and try to lose 'em!

INT. WORKSHOP

BERNARD
Can he do it?

QUINTIN
I don't know, Bernard. Those F-15's are pretty sophisticated.

Larry approaches.

LARRY
Quintin?

QUINTIN
Not now, Larry!

LARRY
I think I have an idea.

They turn to him. Larry looks back at them.

QUINTIN
Well?!

LARRY
The pole. Santa's real close to Magnetic North. If he can get there and stay low enough won't the F-15 radar get all jammed up by the magnetism?

Quintin ponders this for a moment.

QUINTIN
By golly, you're right! I love you, Larry!

Quintin is now furiously sucking on the lollipop.

EXT. THE SLEIGH

SANTA
... Quintin! It's no good! I can't shake them!

QUINTIN (OVER)
Don't panic. Listen. I think we have a solution. Keep heading down... as low as you can go. You'll hit the Magnetic Pole soon and you should be able to lose 'em there. But you gotta get there quick.

SANTA
Roger! Sounds good--

There's a GREAT EXPLOSION very close to the sleigh.

SANTA (CONT'D)
We've been hit! We've been hit!

QUINTIN (OVER)
How bad?

SANTA
Can't tell... oh my god... no!

QUINTIN (OVER)
What? What is it?

SANTA
One of the reindeer's benn hit... Comet! Comet's been hit!

INT. WORKSHOP

Bernard runs up to Quintin. He puts his hand over the microphone so that he can talk to Quintin without Santa hearing.

BERNARD
He's gonna have to cut him loose.

QUINTIN
I know.

BERNARD
He won't make it if he doesn't.

QUINTIN
I know!

Quintin pulls Bernard's hand off the mike.

QUINTIN (CONT'D)
Santa, do you read me?

SANTA (OVER)
Roger, Quintin.

QUINTIN
Look. It's like this. Dead weight is gonna bog you down. You gotta cut Comet loose. The rest can bring you in fast enough.

SANTA (OVER)
(shocked)
What? No! I won't do it!

QUINTIN
I know how you feel--

SANTA (OVER)
He's just hit, Quintin. He's not dead. I can see him. He's alive! I'm not cutting him loose.

QUINTIN
You'll never make it pulling a lame reindeer--

LARRY
They're closing in, Quintin. It's gonna be close.

QUINTIN
Now! Cut him loose now or you're not gonna make it!

EXT. THE SLEIGH

SANTA
(with fierce determination)
We're a team up here. Either we all come back together or--

INT. WORKSHOP

The only sound in the room is HARSH STATIC. They listen to this for a long while.

LARRY
(sadly)
We've lost contact.

ELF
Oh my god...

BERNARD
No.

QUINTIN
He could have made it. He could have...

The STATIC continues.

BERNARD
Damnit, Quintin! Can't you tell?

QUINTIN
Larry?

LARRY
We saw a blast on the screen. Could have been from the F-15. Then there was nothing. He might be over the pole.

Pause.

QUINTIN
We'll know for sure in two minutes.

LARRY
I'm going outside.

Larry begins to leave.

BERNARD
Wait. I'll come with you.

Bernard follows Larry out. Slowly, one by one the REST OF THE ELVES exit, too. Their work is now done. Quintin is left alone in Command Central. He looks up at the blank screen. The STATIC now sounds deafening. Quintin flips a switch and the room goes DEADLY SILENT.

EXT. THE HANGAR - DAWN

Hundreds of elves look skyward. The night sky is about to give up its darkness. A SILENCE, the likes of which can only be produced by hundreds of caring individuals, surrounds the North Pole. It is a moment of reckoning. Faintly, a TINY LONE VOICE SOUNDS.

VOICE
There! Over there! Look!

The mass turns to the same direction. There in the lightening sky a blurry object is seen in the distance.

ANOTHER VOICE
What is that? Is it...

The object gets closer. Soon it comes into focus. It is clearly a sleigh being pulled by seven... no, eight reindeer. A TUMULTUOUS CHEER RINGS OUT.

VOICE
(joyous)
It's them!

Bernard looks at Larry. They jump up and down and hug.

BERNARD
Hey! I never had any doubt!

Quintin is seen in the background.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Quintin! You old wizard, you!
Come here.

Bernard runs to Quintin. They pause, stare at each other and then break into a dance that only elves can do.

CLOSE ON:

The sleigh as it lands near the hangar. Comet, limping along, leads the pack. The sleigh comes to a stop and Santa Claus gets out.

SANTA
(urgently)
Quick!

FIVE ELVES run up and begin to care for Comet. Santa stands next to them.

SANTA (CONT'D)
How ya' feeling, boy?

Comet nods.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Ho, ho ho!

BERNARD (OFF)
Hey, you! In the red suit!

Santa gets down on one knee and opens his arms. Bernard runs to him and is lifted high in the air.

SANTA
Well! That was fun.

Quintin enters the scene. He's now sucking on the lollipop stick.

QUINTIN
Not bad. Not bad at all.

Santa lifts him, too. The three rejoice.

LARRY
That was great! You're wonderful.

SANTA
No. I'm just Santa Claus.

BERNARD
Alright, come on, everybody. We've only got a year to prepare. Let's move it.

The crowd begins to disperse. As it clears, Santa sees Judy.

SANTA
Hi.

JUDY
Hi.

Pause.

JUDY (CONT'D)
Can I get you something?

SANTA
What do you think?

JUDY
Cocoa?

SANTA
Ho, ho ho! And a fresh donut, too!

JUDY
Anything you want... boss.

Judy exits. Santa, Bernard and Quintin are left alone. They begin to walk toward the HOUSE.

SANTA
I'm kinda glad.

BERNARD
'Bout what.

Santa stops and looks at the other two.

SANTA
I'm kinda glad... that Christmas comes but once a year.

They look at him for a moment. Then they all burst out laughing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NEAL AND LAURA'S LIVING ROOM - CHRISTMAS MORNING

Neal and Laura are asleep on the couch They stir.

NEAL
(groggy)
You ok?

LAURA
Huh?

NEAL
What happened?

LAURA
I... I don't know. I fell asleep.

NEAL
I could have sworn that he would show. I really thought he--

Laura looks and sees Tim asleep on the floor next to the tree. She runs to him.

LAURA
Tim? Tim!

Tim wakes up.

TIM
Mom!

They hug.

LAURA
Tim, are you okay?

TIM
Yeah, great.

LAURA
Where have you been... how did you get here?

TIM
Dad brought me.

NEAL
I knew he'd come on Christmas Eve!

Tim notices all the presents under the tree.

TIM
Alright! Presents!

He starts ripping them open.

Neal notices something under the tree.

LAURA
What?

NEAL
Look.

THEIR POV

Under the tree are two presents. One marked, "Neal" the other, "Laura".

BACK TO SCENE

Tim wakes up. He gives his mom a hug. Neal gets the two presents.

NEAL
(to Tim)
Did you put those there?

TIM
Nuh-uh.

Laura and Neal take their respective package. They begin to open them. Inside each is a beautiful velvet box. The kind in which you'd find an expensive watch. They open the box. They each remove its contents.

They hold it up. It's not a watch at all. Inside each of the beautiful velvet boxes is a nice piece of coal. A tag hangs from each piece. On the tag is a note.

CLOSE UP: ONE OF THE NOTES.

It reads: "NEXT YEAR... YOU'D BETTER BE NICE."

BACK TO SCENE

Neal and Laura look at each other as Tim laughs.

FINAL FADE: